



Montana Advocates for Children

2007 Legislative Agenda

EXHIBIT 5
DATE 1-12-07
HB 120

1. We support maintaining eligibility for child care payment assistance at 150% of federal poverty rate and annually updating eligibility at that rate. To:
 - Stabilize the workforce by maintaining family eligibility.
 - Allow low income working families to qualify for child care payment assistance by annually adjusting family eligibility for child care assistance to stay current with inflation.
 - Stabilize the care and education for young children so they can be ready for school.
2. We support conducting an annual Market Rate Survey and annually updating child care reimbursement rates. To:
 - Assure that low income families have equal access to high quality child care services at 75% of the available child care facilities. High quality care is critical for the development and school readiness of young children at risk due to poverty.
 - Stabilize small child care businesses by providing cost of living increases and encourage providers to improve the quality of care and education.
-  3. We urge that the Montana Child Care Act be revised to allow the flexibility for monthly rates to meet provider's needs. To:
 - Allow flexibility for hourly, daily, weekly, and monthly rates for child care assistance and allow DPHHS to pay child care providers monthly, the same as private clients do.
 - Reduce paperwork requirements and increase efficiency in administering child care assistance.
 - Reflect the true costs of maintaining available child care slots.
4. We support Equalizing the Eligibility for Head Start and Child Care.
 - Conflicting and inconsistent eligibility requirements for early childhood programs cause hardships for low income families.
 - Children eligible for Head Start services may not be eligible for child care payment assistance or may become ineligible due to changing circumstances and the means by which eligibility is determined
 - Working families of children enrolled in and income eligible for Head Start or Early Head Start would be determined eligible for child care assistance for one year.
 - The estimated cost to serve approximately 400 additional children would be less than \$3,400 annually per family (a maximum of \$1.4 million).
5. We support providing child care assistance to working caretaker relatives.
 - Provide more support for children on TANF who are being raised by working grandparents and other relatives.
6. We support enforcement of seat belt and child safety seat laws as a primary offense.
 - Montana is the only state in the nation with secondary child safety seat laws. Drivers must be stopped for other offenses before being cited for seat belt or child seat offenses.
 - Primary enforcement allows officers to stop drivers who are not wearing seat belts or have children in their vehicles who are not properly secured. It increases use and saves lives.

 Montana Advocates for Children is a coalition of state level professional organizations including Montana Association for the Education of Young Children, Montana Child Care Association, Montana Head Start Association, and Montana Child Care Resource & Referral Network.